Research Application Guideline

1. Purpose

St John Western Australia (SJWA) encourages and supports high quality research within an ethical framework that aims to improve patient care in the discipline of out-of-hospital and prehospital care, and which aligns with the organisation's strategic direction.

This Research Application Guideline is designed to help you provide the information that is used by SJWA to prioritise participation in research projects involving SJWA patients, Volunteers, staff, or data. Individuals considering the development of research proposals are requested to provide information using the online research portal or downloading, completing and submitting the **Research Application Form**.

It is expected that prior to formulating and submitting a research proposal, researchers make contact with SJWA research to discuss the proposed research. This will help to reduce delays in the application process, which can be caused by incomplete or inappropriate applications, or applications for topics which are already being researched. **If human research ethics committee (HREC) approval is required for your research, this should be sought and approved prior to completing this application form and submitting to SJWA.**

2. Roles and Responsibilities

Role	Responsibility
Researchers	• Submit a complete research application form and when requested submit a project protocol (refer to Appendix A for a template). • Provide evidence of HREC approval for the study if applicable. • Submit progress reports to SJWA on an annual basis aligned with the approval anniversary for the project. • Practice in an ethical and professional manner, consistent with relevant legislation, regulatory requirements, and standards. • Protect the privacy and confidentiality of personal and health information while performing research functions. • Avoid any real or apparent conflicts of interest. • Report improper conduct.
Research Participants	• **Providing informed consent:** Participants must read and understand the study details, risks, and benefits before voluntarily agreeing to take part. • **Honest and accurate participation:** Participants should provide truthful responses and follow research procedures as instructed to maintain data integrity and validity. • **Respecting confidentiality and conduct:** Participants should respect the privacy of other participants and researchers, follow the study guidelines,

	and avoid actions that could compromise the research. • **Reporting concerns or adverse effects:** If participants experience discomfort, side effects, or ethical concerns, they should report them to the research team promptly. • **Withdrawing from research:** Participants retain the right to withdraw from research without negative consequences, penalty or fear of discrimination, loss of benefits, or any form of retaliation (e.g., healthcare access, employment status, or financial support should remain unaffected). They also have the right to request the removal of their data from the study unless the data has already been anonymised or used in analysis.
SJWA Research Governance Committee (SJWA RGC)	• **Review and approval:** Collectively assess and if appropriate approve research proposals that are robustly designed with a suitably experienced team, have clear benefits for patients, Volunteers, staff and/or the organisation, and comply with ethical principles, such as respect for participants, informed consent, and minimisation of harm. • **Data protection and confidentiality assurance:** Ensure that company data and staff information are managed securely, in compliance with data protection laws and company policies, to prevent unauthorised access or breaches. • **Risk assessment and mitigation:** Evaluates potential risks to patients, Volunteers, staff, and company reputation, ensuring that appropriate safeguards are in place to minimise harm and protect stakeholders. • **Ethical and legal compliance review:** Assesses research proposals to ensure they meet ethical standards, legal requirements, and company policies regarding privacy, consent, and responsible data use. • **Approval, monitoring, and oversight:** Grant approval for research projects that meet governance standards, monitors ongoing research to ensure compliance including receiving annual progress reports, and reviews any issues or concerns that arise during the study.

3. Advice to Applicants

SJWA encourages collaborative research projects, and we advise researchers to initiate contact with SJWA research before submitting a research application. It is expected that at least one senior, experienced and suitable SJWA team member is included as a co-investigator for projects involving significant use of SJWA data and/or people. SJWA may choose to nominate this appropriate team member if required.

The Research Application Form is the main source of information available to the SJWA RGC when assessing research applications. Each application must be fully complete and contain all the necessary information for project consideration, without the need for further written or oral explanation. Please write in clear, everyday English and define all terminology and abbreviations.

All details in the application must be current at the time of application and should reflect the research protocol approved by the relevant HREC. The checklist at the end of the Research Application Form will assist you in ensuring all relevant documents are included in your application.

All project applications will be reviewed and are subject to approval in accordance with SJWA's Research Governance Policy. SJWA will notify the applicant of the outcome of the SJWA RGC evaluation.

SJWA will assess projects based on the following criteria:

- **SJWA Strategic priorities:** The proposal will be examined to determine if it aligns with SJWA's strategic research priorities.

- **Scientific quality:** Proposals must demonstrate strong methodology, innovation, and a sound research plan. The study design should be rigorous, feasible, and likely to generate significant knowledge.

- **Innovation and creativity:** Applications should present novel ideas, approaches, or methodologies that push boundaries in their field. The research should offer fresh perspectives or transformative potential. Proposed research that explores a topic that is already under active investigation in another SJWA RGC-approved project may be declined by the SJWA RGC (e.g. survey-based research, refer to Appendix B).

- **Significance and benefit:** The project must address an important research question with clear health, scientific, or societal impact. Outcomes should be relevant, beneficial, and contribute to advancements in knowledge or practice.

- **Capability:** The research team should have the expertise, experience, and resources to successfully execute the project. Collaboration, leadership, and past achievements are considered in assessing team strength. This includes existence of research funding and the credentials and technical competence of the researchers.

- **Ethics, privacy and consent:** Researchers should demonstrate deep thought around the ethical complexities of the proposed research including informed consent, and post-research support for participants if appropriate. This would also include aspects such as privacy and confidentiality, protection of vulnerable populations and handling conflicts of interest.

- **Data Management:** Researchers should clearly detail their plan for data collection, storage and sharing, along with data security and protection. Access and ownership of the research data must also be clearly addressed.

- **Risk:** Has the proposal been approved by a registered or certified HREC? Are there risks and/or impacts to SJWA, including resourcing, time, or over-surveying of the SJWA workforce.

In general, SJWA will **not** approve research proposals that:

- Involve interventions that hold potential to pose clinical risk to patients, staff, Volunteers and organisation.
- Are likely to involve any contention in the provision of care.
- Involve additional costs that are not fully funded.
- Are not submitted in accordance with the advice and instruction to applicants.
- Provide incomplete or misleading information.
- Conflict with current research projects in operation.
- Do not align with the HREC approved proposal.
- Employ a research design that is unlikely to have translatable or actionable insights (e.g. limited surveys or focus groups).

In 2025, SJWA adopted a cost recovery model for some external data requests which are supported by significant project funding. The cost recovery model is based on the time and resources required to deliver a data request.

Due to resource limitations and a need to integrate research activities with normal business requirements, it is also necessary to prioritise research requests. This can sometimes lead to delays in project approval and the provision of SJWA data during times of significant workload. Please contact research@stjohnwa.com.au if you have any questions.

4. Collaborative funding submissions or expression of interest for funding

Funding applications and Expressions of Interest (EOI) that require SJWA participation and/or data may require a letter of SJWA organisational support prior to submission to the funding body. Once funded, final project applications are required to be processed via the full SJWA research governance pathway using the Research Application Form. Contact research@stjohnwa.com.au if you are expressing interest in collaborating with SJWA as part of a funding application.

5. Progress Reports

Annual progress reports are required for approved projects. Researchers will be requested to submit a progress report every twelve (12) months from the date of SJWA RGC approval. Reports are required to be submitted to SJWA electronically within four (4) weeks of request. SJWA RGC approval is provided subject to timely completion of progress reports, and failure to provide updates may lead to project termination.

6. Application Form

6.1 Your Research Team (Investigators)

Please provide details of the Chief Investigator, Responsible Investigator and other investigators, including the SJWA co-investigator(s). Indicate the responsibilities of the researchers with respect to the project and the experience of the research team. A Confidentiality Agreement and Data Sharing Agreement will be required after project approval by the RGC, and should be provided for any/all parties which will handle or deal with SJWA Staff, Volunteers or data. We will email you with this request at an appropriate time.

Finally, please declare all perceived or actual **conflicts of interest**(s) for each co-investigator in relation to the project. These conflicts of interest may be financial, personal, professional/affiliation, regulatory or supervisory, vendor/supplier or legal in nature. Specifically, researchers should indicate whether they have received any funds or gifts from pharmaceutical or device companies associated with the research and whether this information will be disclosed to participants.

6.2 Your Research Environment

List all the locations where the research will be conducted, data analysed and stored (Please specify department at institutions, address, building names/numbers). Select the type of organisation that is primarily responsible for the research proposal. If the research is supported by funding, including internal funding, please declare this. If there is no specific funding allocated to the research project, please state how the research will be supported.

6.3 Your Proposal Information

6.3.1 Relationship to other projects

Indicate whether the project is a new stand-alone project or related in some way to a previously approved project. A related project is one that is a follow-up or extension of previous work and will usually not have been flagged in the original application.

6.3.2 Project Plain Language Summary

In 50 – 100 words, provide a plain language summary regarding the background and specific aims of the proposal, while avoiding highly technical terms, medical terminology, and abbreviations.

6.3.3 Research Study Type

Please select the study type that best describes the research proposal. If there are multiple study types within the proposal, please select all that apply.

Quality improvement/assurance projects submitted by external researchers must be classified as non-research by a recognised Human Research Ethics Committee. Please indicate if the project is a student project (e.g. forms part or all an Honours or PhD thesis) and the type of qualification currently being undertaken. Indicate if the project is a feasibility study for a larger study (e.g. a retrospective case review of patients with respiratory distress to ascertain the potential sample size for a clinical trial). If the study is a feasibility study, provide brief details of the proposed larger study.

6.3.4 Participants and Data Request/Collection

Specify whether the research proposal will enrol participants and select the relevant participants. Select if the research proposal requires access to data or implements a trial of a device or drug. Select the appropriate data collection methodologies and/or data type request relevant to the research proposal.

6.3.5 Project Aims

Provide the main research aim(s) or primary research question that the proposal will address.

6.3.6 Project Background

Provide a concise background to the proposed project (4000 characters maximum). It should include participant/intervention information, identification of the research question or problem, and the necessity or rationale for the research project.

6.3.7 Project Methodological Summary

Provide a concise summary of the planned methodology for the proposed research (4000 characters maximum). It should specify the study groups and how the groups are selected (e.g. study recruitment, selection, inclusion/exclusion criteria), sample size including power calculations or how many records/participants will be involved. The data variables that are required and any cross-over study designs should be specified (e.g. if a cohort member appears in more than one group of interest). If the data you are requesting includes index events, such as looking back or follow up periods, these should be defined. The data flow, including provision of data for linkage and role separation should be outlined.

6.3.8 Project Analysis Plan

Provide a concise summary of the planned analysis approach (no more than 300 words). It should describe how the requested or collected data will be analysed to address each research aim(s). The types of statistical approaches should also be outlined.

6.3.9 Project Duration

Specify the expected project start and finish dates. In general, the duration of the project starts on the date of SJWA and/or Human Research Ethics Committee approval (whichever is latest) and ends on the date of completion of data analysis and the production of a final report.

6.4 Data Request, Participant Consent & Data Security

6.4.1 Section 95A of the Privacy Act 1988, Australian Privacy Principles and Waivers of Consent

Requests for SJWA data release is required to be considered in line with Section 95A of the Privacy Act 1988 and the 13 Australian Privacy Principles. These frameworks ask those involved in conducting research and the compilation or analysis of statistics or health service management, to weigh the public interest in research or the compilation or analysis of statistics, or health service management activities against the public interest in the protection of privacy. Refer to this Flowchart for more details. Furthermore, they govern standards, rights and obligations around, the collection, use and disclosure of personal information, an organisation or agency's governance and accountability, integrity and correction of personal information, and the rights of individuals to access their personal information.

Refer to the NHMRC Section 95A Flowchart to determine if your research project requires consent, a waiver of consent or an opt-out approach is to be implemented. Please provide a response around

how your data request is compliant with these guidelines, and whether your proposed research or the compilation of analysis of statistics, or proposed activity is relevant to public health or public safety. Please address whether a waiver of consent is being sought (Refer to National Statement paragraphs 2.3.9-2.3.12).

6.4.2 Data Request / Collection

Consider and select the appropriate classification for the collected and/or requested data in line with the *Freedom of Information Act 1992* (WA). Consider whether the data is non-personal or non-identifiable, reasonably re-identifiable, or personal identifiable information.

Specify the precise personal information variables that will be collected or requested, and address how participant consent will be obtained if applicable. Only variables that are necessary to achieve the research aims should be requested.

Note: SJWA will only provide identified/potentially re-identifiable data if it is essential to the research methodology. This includes full date of birth. These projects must have appropriate Human Research Ethics Committee approval specifying this, and may require completion of a Privacy Impact Assessment.

6.4.3 Security Plan

Please describe the Security Plan for the protection of the information provided by SJWA, or the information to be received from persons contacted because of SJWA's actions. The Security Plan should specify the measures that will be taken to protect the information from misuse, loss or unauthorised access during the research project (see WA DoH **Research Governance Procedure** Section 16.4 and **WA Department of Health Information Security Policy**). Provide details on how data will be protected from a technological and physical perspective, and how your approach is compliant regarding data retention and disposal. This includes a declaration of whether and which AI programs will be used to analyses data. Refer to the WA Department of Health (DoH) **Information Retention and Disposal Policy**, and **Information Storage Policy**.

6.5 Human Research Ethics Committee Approval

All required ethics clearances and approvals must be obtained from an officially approved/endorsed Human Research Ethics Committee (HREC) before submission to the SJWA RGC. After submission of this form an email request will come from SJWA asking you to provide details of the HREC that have reviewed the protocol, and to attach a copy of the ethics application and approval certificate from the relevant Committee.

Projects which have been amended after HREC approval will need to be re-submitted in order for the amended protocol to receive approval. Please ensure that there are no discrepancies between the protocol approved by the HREC and the protocol submitted to SJWA. This could cause significant delays in obtaining SJWA approval.

Describe the ethical considerations and risks that are specific to SJWA, including the SJWA workforce and patients. Give an overall risk-rating for your proposal (low, medium, or high). Potential issues may include privacy, confidentiality, data storage and transfer, consequences of participation and consent. Individuals considering new research proposals should be aware that out-of-hospital research often

raises specific ethical issues, particularly the issue relating to patient informed consent. Ethics committees rarely approve research projects undertaken without informed consent, except in a specific and limited range of circumstances.

Provide details of potential risks to participants and SJWA in relation to participation in the project. Give a likelihood estimate of risks and provide information on strategies which will be employed to reduce the likelihood of potential risks.

Explain the monitoring, reporting and other procedures set up to manage serious adverse events and unforeseen events. Adverse events may relate to the participants or to unintended events in relation to information. Where applicable, an adverse event monitoring committee may need to be established. All adverse events must be reported in writing to SJWA Research and the Patient Safety and Quality Team.

7. Impact to St John WA (SJWA)

7.1 Benefit

Provide a description of how the proposed research will directly benefit patients, paramedics, Volunteers, SJWA staff, and/or the SJWA organisation.

7.2 Dissemination of Research Findings and Confidentiality

Describe the proposed method of results/findings publication (e.g. conference presentations, study summary for participants, peer reviewed journals, PhD thesis etc.). Describe how SJWA will be involved in the review of study results and proposed presentations and publications. Proposed publications should be sent to the SJWA co-investigator for review prior to submission to conference organisers or journal editors. All publications/presentations resulting from the use of SJWA data patient or people, must include acknowledgement of St John WA data/personnel.

SJWA ideally require co-ownership of the results of the research. If any party publishes the results and outcomes, SJWA should receive appropriate recognition. SJWA will generally not approve projects where authorship is not offered to an SJWA co-investigator.

Describe how participant confidentiality will be maintained in the dissemination of results. You should acknowledge the requirement to ensure information presented in publications is not identifiable including suppressing cells where low counts may reidentify individuals particularly in rural postcodes.

7.3 Ownership of Research Results/Findings

Describe the proposed ownership of research data and study results, particularly in relation to SJWA and in reference to the NHMRC Management of Data and Information in Research: A guide supporting the Australian Code for the Responsible Conduct of Research. Institutional policies should clarify the criteria that will be used to determine the status of research data and primary materials in these circumstances. Institutional policies should cover cases where researchers move between institutions or employers and where research data are held outside of Australia. Projects which form part of a body of study (e.g. PhD), are still expected to involve an appropriate SJWA team member as a co-investigator.

7.4 Requirement of SJWA Personnel

Describe the proposed time requirement for SJWA personnel (staff, paramedics, and Volunteers) regarding the proposed research as research participants or investigators involved data extraction and/or analysis. Please fully justify the need to use participant time, particularly via administration of a survey. Researchers are requested to be cognisant of the fact that SJWA is frequently requested to participate in projects which involve surveying and interviewing Paramedics/Volunteers. Projects involving surveys and/or interviews may be rejected to prevent "over-surveying" of the SJWA workforce. Please see Appendix B: Guidelines for Recruitment of Paramedics/Volunteers as Research Participants. The SJWA Research Governance Committee has a commitment to assess each research project application on its merits.

If your research project involves surveys, interviews or focus groups, please ensure that:

- Your survey instrument is of the highest quality.
- You have experience in conducting effective focus groups and translating focus group data into meaningful research outcomes.
- You have discussed your project with SJWA Research to eliminate duplication of research, and explore alternative methods of data gathering that may provide an answer to your research question without requiring unnecessary surveys or focus groups.

Indicate exactly what will be required of SJWA personnel (e.g. data extract, data linkage, paramedic time). Participation time should be clearly summarised in the table provided. Provide details of training requirements for SJWA personnel. This could include briefing of relevant SJWA personnel regarding study methodology.

SJWA requests that the SJWA co-investigator will be allowed to take an active role in the research project. It is expected that the SJWA co-investigator will be provided the opportunity to participate in the project in a manner which **warrants co-authorship** on study publications. Participation should align with the International Committee of Medical Journal Editors (ICMJE) guidelines (http://www.icmje.org/recommendations/browse/roles-and-responsibilities/defining-the-role-of-authors-and-contributors).

7.5 Financial Costs to SJWA

In 2025, SJWA adopted a cost recovery model for external data requests which are supported by significant project funding. Due to resource limitations and a need to integrate research activities with normal business requirements, the cost recovery model is based on the time and resources required to deliver a data request. A project budget may be requested after application submission, which outlines direct costs related to SJWA. Please contact research@stjohnwa.com.au if you have any questions.

In general, SJWA will not seek to recover costs associated with student PhD projects, unless the project has direct funding for data collection, data management or analysis. Project funding will not impact the priority or outcome of research governance reviews and approvals.

8. Governance

Submitted research proposals to SJWA will be processed by the SJWA RGC in line with the SJWA Research Governance Policy. Depending on the nature of the project and data required, various

levels of organisational endorsement requirements will be imposed. The SJWA RGC Chair will assess the risk of a project and determine the required endorsement in collaboration with the RGC members.

Research proposal applicant(s) must also provide written acknowledgement from their Head of School or equivalent manger. This acknowledgement demonstrates an awareness of the research proposal and the acceptance of the legal and ethical responsibility for the conduct of the project and the existence of adequate indemnity insurance to cover the conduct of this project. This will be requested via email post submission of this application form.

9. References and Supporting Documents

Under these guidelines, the following documents/supporting information are relevant and should be consulted if deemed appropriate:

- Australian Privacy Principles
- Ambulance Services WA - Clinical Research - St John Ambulance (stjohnwa.com.au)
- Australian Code for the Responsible Conduct of Research
- NHMRC Guidelines approved under Section 95A of the Privacy Act 1988
- NHMRC Ideas Grant Guidelines
- NHMRC Management of Data and Information in Research: A guide supporting the Australian Code for the Responsible Conduct of Research
- NHMRC National Statement on Ethical Conduct in Human Research
- WA Department of Health Information Retention and Disposal Policy
- WA Department of Health Information Security Policy
- WA Department of Health Information Storage Policy
- WA Department of Health Research Governance Procedures

Policy Administration			
Directorate:		**Responsible Manager:**	
Clinical Excellence & State Services		Chair Research Governance Committee	
Risk Rating:	**Review Cycle:**	**Review Next Due:**	
High	Biennial	31/12/2027	
Version:	**Decision Reference:**	**Synopsis:**	
0	Dan Rose	Implementation of new research application process	

Appendix A – Proposed Research Protocol

Attach a detailed project protocol. The following elements should be included in the proposed research protocol.

1.	**Literature review**	An analysis of previous literature and studies, including references.
2.	**Rationale for project**	Description of how your proposed research will compliment, enhance, or contribute to existing knowledge. Explain why this research is necessary given existing knowledge in this field. Note, that replication of previous studies in the field is acceptable if, for example, the aim is to confirm or extend existing results, using more rigorous experimental criteria.
3.	**Primary hypothesis**	And/or research questions, if applicable. Some projects may not have specific hypotheses.
4.	**Aims**	All projects should have aims, including those that do not have a specific research question or hypothesis.
5.	**Methodology**	Scientific description of experimental procedures, surveys and questionnaires, recruitment strategies and other relevant information. • Please provide sufficient detail to enable SJWA to determine the project's methodological rigour. Indicate any limitations of the project design and any potential sources of bias and how these will be managed. • For questionnaires and data collection instruments that are not well-known, details of validation or other publications should be provided.
6.	**Inclusion/exclusion criteria**	Include details of criteria for inclusion and/or exclusion of participants or data.
7.	**Randomisation procedures**	Where applicable.
8.	**Sample size/power calculation**	Where applicable.
9.	**Statistical or other analyses**	To ensure rigorous research design, seek professional advice from a clinical epidemiologist or biostatistician.
10	**Project timeline**	Attach a Gantt chart describing the proposed project timeline and associated tasks and milestones.

Appendix B – Guideline for Recruitment of Paramedics/Volunteers as Research Participants

There are many applications submitted annually to the SJWA Research Governance Committee requesting to survey or conduct focus groups with the Paramedic or Volunteer workforce for research purposes. The SJWA RGC has a responsibility to ensure all research is of high quality, aligns with organisational needs, and creates research that is of maximum benefit with minimal risks. Please consider the following carefully when submitting your research application.

Survey fatigue

Research has shown that repeated surveying of a population can lead to 'survey fatigue'. This results in reduced response rates, poor quality survey responses and an aversion to participating in future research. Therefore, it is important that the SJWA RGC carefully select survey-based projects to ensure Paramedics and Volunteers remain optimally receptive to research participation. This also means that surveys that replicate previous studies or aspects of previous studies are unlikely to be approved. Similarly, focus groups that are poorly conducted, or yield outcomes of minimal benefit are of concern to SJWA.

Note: Due to our limited resources and capacity, SJWA are **not** in a position to directly send survey and recruitment emails to staff and Volunteers. However, if a survey-based research application is approved by the St John WA Research Governance Committee, access to the survey link can be hosted on our internal research hub page, but this will not entail an active recruitment strategy for study participants.

Ethics

Does your recruitment of Paramedics or Volunteers comply with the principle of Justice according to the National Statement on Ethical Conduct in Human Research?

- Is asking Paramedics or Volunteers to complete this survey or participate in your focus group fair?
- Is it likely that Paramedics or Volunteers will have to complete this activity in their own personal time?
- Are there any benefits to Paramedics or Volunteers for participation in your research?
- What response rate do you expect and are you likely to obtain a biased sample? How will this impact the value of your research?
- Do you have training, skills, and experience in conducting focus groups?
- Is the survey of exceptionally high quality and has it been validated?
- Is your research protocol likely to yield unique, publishable results that will be of interest or benefit to SJWA and its Paramedics or Volunteers?

Organisational responsibility

As an organisation and an employer, SJWA has a responsibility to ensure that its workforce is protected from unnecessary stressors. A constant stream of unsolicited emails to a work-based personal email, internal mail survey packages, branch visits and other methods of recruitment do create pressure to participate, even when subtle. Please outline…

- How do you plan to recruit your Paramedics or Volunteers participants?
- What is the risk to their privacy?
- What is the chance of coercion when surveys are distributed via their employer?
- What is the impact on their levels of workplace stress?
- Does the quality and impact of your survey mitigate these risks via its extensive benefit to Paramedics or Volunteers or the organisation?